United Nations A/C.3/56/6

General Assembly

Distr.: General
26 October 2001

Original: English

Fifty-sixth session
Third Committee
Agenda items 12 and 110

Report of the Economic and Social Council

Crime prevention and criminal justice

Letter dated 23 October 2001 from the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the summary of the Seoul Anti-Corruption Symposium, held on 30 and 31 August 2001 in Seoul, Republic of Korea, co-hosted by the Seoul Metropolitan Government and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat. The summary contains conclusions and recommendations of the Symposium.

It would be greatly appreciated if you could have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly, under agenda items 12, "Report of the Economic and Social Council" and 110, "Crime prevention and criminal justice".

(*Signed*) **Sun** Joun-yung
Permanent Representative

01-60487 (E) 301001

Annex to the letter dated 23 October 2001 from the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

SEOUL ANTI-CORRUPTION SYMPOSIUM 2001

Executive Summary

(2 October 2001)

From 30 to 31 August 2001, the Seoul Metropolitan Government and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs co-hosted the *Seoul Anti-Corruption Symposium 2001* which was attended by representatives from international organizations (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, the Asian Development Bank, and Transparency International) as well as representatives of countries from the various regions of the world. It was organized by the Seoul Institute for Transparency and supported by the Asia Foundation.

The main objective of the Symposium was to assist major urban centers to increase transparency in their public administrations and thus reduce corruption through sharing the experience of Seoul, in particular its Online Procedures ENhancement for civil application (OPEN) system. This web-based system allows citizens to monitor corruption-prone applications for permits or approvals and to raise questions in the event any irregularities are detected. At the same time, the Symposium enabled participants to share their own experiences and practices on various anti-corruption measures that have been successful or not so successful. It is hoped that this exchange of experiences will assist participants to gain a new perspective on anti-corruption measures that might be effective in their respective cities and/or countries.

The Symposium participants adopted important Conclusions and Recommendations, as follows:

Recalling the Joint Statement of Cooperation between the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Seoul Metropolitan Government,

Reaffirming the importance of transparency, accountability and responsiveness in public administration, particularly in promoting ethics and preventing corruption in local, state and central administrations,

Recognizing the advances in e-government that allow for more efficient, real-time, citizen-centered delivery of services,

Bearing in mind that innovations in these areas should be effectively integrated into an administrative framework, and

Stressing the importance of the role of political leadership in demonstrating commitment for clean and transparent governments;

The participants of the Seoul Anti-Corruption Symposium 2001 in their capacity as experts in local, state and central administration, public sector ethics, and anti-corruption policies:

Recognize Seoul's OPEN System as a useful example for parties interested in improving the transparency and accountability of their administrations and suggest the distribution of the manual, Mechanism to Increase Transparency in Administration: OPEN System of Seoul, by the United Nations and the Seoul Metropolitan Government,

Recommend that the United Nations and Seoul Metropolitan Government continue to provide technical cooperation in the spirit of the aforementioned UN-Seoul Joint Statement, including

promoting bilateral technical cooperation, upon request from those parties interested in introducing or improving e-government measures not only to combat corruption and promote ethics but also to generally upgrade public services to citizens, using information technology to the betterment of humankind,

Suggest that the organizers of the Seoul Anti-Corruption Symposium 2001 and other interested parties consider a follow-up meeting in the near future, two or three years hence, to monitor the progress of technical cooperation in introducing or improving administrative measures such as the Seoul OPEN system, and

Also suggest that the Korean authorities take steps to bring the Conclusions and Recommendations of this Symposium to the attention of the 56th Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations in the context of its forthcoming discussion on the subject of Public Administration and Development.

Summary of Proceedings

Background

Seoul, the capital of the Republic of Korea, has led the development of its country as its center of politics, economy, education and culture. As such, it has fostered a rapid economic growth of the country. However, like many metropolitan cities, it faces the problem of corruption, which accompanies such rapid growth.

Recognizing that the issue of corruption is not only one of good will or ethical behavior on the part of an individual official but also one of creating an administrative system that effectively eliminates the causes of corruption and prevents wrongdoing, the Municipality adopted a systematic approach to combat corruption. This approach simultaneously pursues four major lines of action, namely, preventive measures, punitive measures, ensuring transparency in administration, and enhanced public-private partnership. One of the initiatives taken by the City of Seoul to combat corruption is the Online Procedures ENhancement for civil application, which is known as the OPEN system. The OPEN system was developed to achieve transparency in the city's administration by preventing unnecessary delays or unjust handling of civil affairs on the part of the civil servants. This web-based system allows citizens to monitor corruption-prone applications for permits or approvals and to raise questions in the event any irregularities are detected.

In May 2001, the Seoul Metropolitan Government and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs signed a *Joint Statement of Cooperation* to work together to introduce the OPEN system to the Member States of the United Nations as a good practice. As outlined in the *Joint Statement*, the two organizations co-hosted the *Seoul Anti-Corruption Symposium 2001* from 30 to 31 August 2001. The Symposium was organized by the Seoul Institute for Transparency and supported by the Asia Foundation. It was well attended by representatives from international organizations such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, the Asian Development Bank and Transparency International as well as from countries from the various regions of the world. During the two-day meeting, the participants experienced directly the features of the OPEN system and reviewed a draft manual on how to operate it. The manual, to be jointly produced, will be available in the six official languages of the United Nations to its Member States.

The main objective of the Symposium was to assist major urban centers to increase transparency in their public administrations and thus reduce corruption through sharing the experience of Seoul, in particular its OPEN system. At the same time, the Symposium enabled participants to share their own experiences and practices on various anti-corruption measures that have been successful or not so successful. It is hoped that this exchange of experiences will assist participants to gain a new perspective on anti-corruption measures that might be effective in their respective cities and/or countries.

In view of the *Conclusions and Recommendations* adopted, the participants and organizers have embarked on the achievement of these goals. This document shows that the participants reaffirmed the importance of transparency, accountability and responsiveness in public administration; recognized the advances in e-government and the need to effectively integrate innovations into an administrative framework; and stressed the importance of political leadership in demonstrating a commitment to clean government. They recognized the Seoul OPEN System as a useful tool for parties interested in improving the transparency and accountability of their administrations and suggested the distribution of a manual on the System, in preparation by the Seoul Metropolitan Government and the United Nations. They recommended continued technical cooperation by the Seoul Metropolitan Government and the United Nations and the promotion of bilateral technical cooperation for interested parties. They also recommended that a follow-up meeting be considered within two or three years. Finally, they suggested that the Korean authorities bring the findings of the Symposium to the attention of the 56th Session of the General Assembly.

A final report of the Symposium, containing a summary of the discussions and background papers, will be issued. The organizing framework of the report is the Symposium programme. The summary of the discussions, reported by Session, follows below.

Session I: Corruption and Development

This opening session was devoted to an exploration of the link between corruption and development. Four presentations were made by participants representing the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), New York University, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Korean Association for Corruption Studies. No discussions were scheduled.

The first presentation by OECD shared some experiences and lessons gained through efforts in fostering good public governance, promoting good governance in the corporate world, and fighting bribery in business transactions. In addition, the importance of taking full advantage of the opportunities offered by developments in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) was highlighted.

The next presentation, *The Electronic Government, Transparency and Performance Management in the Public Sector*, was made by Professor Dennis Smith of New York University. He argued that for the full fruits of e-government and transparency to be realized they must be combined with another innovation, which is performance management. While e-government, transparency, and outcome measurement and management all have something to contribute to the good governance of cities, together they can be a truly powerful form of "managing for results."

The Asian Development Bank's presentation looked at the role of Multilateral Development Institutions (MDIs) in combating corruption through supporting and promoting the principles of good governance. The three roles of MDIs were pointed out: increasing awareness of corruption

and its impact on society, ensuring that controlling corruption is relevant to its member countries and setting an example of good governance to the public.

Finally, Professor Young-Jong Kim of Sungsil University made the presentation, *Anti-Corruption System in Korea: Toward Integrated Strategies for Local Governments*. He brought up the issue of corruption in the Korean context and made various suggestions on strategies for local governments to control corruption. Also, the importance of establishing an integrated strategy of both the local and national levels for an effective fight against corruption was emphasized.

Session II: Transparency Mechanism of Seoul Metropolitan Government - the OPEN System

The presentation made by the Seoul Metropolitan Government (SMG) followed the evolution of the Seoul OPEN system by explaining its background and situating it among the other anti-corruption initiatives introduced by SMG. Like many other rapidly developing urban centers, the City of Seoul experienced a need to tackle its corruption problem. The SMG was once described as a "pandemonium," due to local officials abusing their discretionary power, particularly when granting various permits and licenses. To remedy the situation, the SMG adopted a systematic approach to eradicate corruption: preventive measures, punitive measures, increased transparency in administration, and enhanced public-private partnership.

First, radical deregulation was carried out, abolishing and revising 80% of regulations that were unduly confining. Furthermore, to prevent illicit ties with business, the long-standing practice of assigning jurisdiction over a specific area to one individual was abolished, and officials are regularly rotated. Second, city officials are punished for every act of wrongdoing. To ensure the implementation of the principle of 'zero tolerance' for corruption, Seoul City has introduced various reporting measures, including e-mail, hotlines, and direct report card to the Mayor. Third, the Online Procedures ENhancement for Civil Applications was introduced. This system allows the public to monitor the process of their applications through the Internet. Open records of all stages of an administrative procedure eliminate the need for personal contact with a particular official. It does away with the so-called "express fees". Since the OPEN system began operation in April 1999, the transparency and integrity of the Seoul Metropolitan Government by Seoul has greatly improved, according to the feedback received from Seoul residents. Finally, there is an Anti-Corruption Index. Through this index, the Seoul administration evaluates the level of integrity of each administrative unit and makes the result public on an annual basis. The City administration actively involves citizens in its various anti-corruption activities.

In the following discussion, the panelists raised some key points. An observation was made that Seoul's anti-corruption initiatives, and the OPEN system in particular, seem to be working in those sectors or services where the jurisdiction is at the city level. The question of their effectiveness arises where the jurisdiction is shared with other regional or central governments, in the absence of a similar system on their part. So the issue of the introduction of similar or complementary systems in other jurisdictions was raised. Another panelist brought up the issue of how to increase the usage of the reporting mechanisms by the public to report corrupt acts and the need for methodologies for accurately measuring the efficacy of these and other anti-corruption measures of the SMG. Finally, the need to sustain the momentum of these anti-corruption initiatives, even in the face of a change of government, through non-partisan support was stressed.

Session III: Effective Ways to Combat Corruption in Municipal Governments

Session III aimed to distil some lessons on effective ways to combat corruption, in general, and at the municipal level, in particular. Three presentations were made by: 1) the United Nations on its role, 2) the Asia Foundation on the role of businesses, and 3) Transparency International-Korea on the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

The United Nations made a presentation that corruption can be seen as one symptom of poor administration and mismanagement. Through this optic, corruption is primarily due to a structural problem of institutional weaknesses that can be overcome by strengthening institutional capacities and training citizens of their rights. The role of the United Nations is to facilitate the exchange of experiences and practices among national and sub-national governments and other interested stakeholders in the private sector and civil society and promote mutual cooperation.

The presentation by the Asia Foundation focused on the importance of involving businesses in counter corruption efforts, since they are both perpetrators and victims of corrupt acts. Because corruption increases the cost of doing business for everyone and shuts out some groups from certain lines of business altogether, there is a strong incentive for the business community to become involved in counter corruption activities. The example of the involvement of the Makati Business Club in the Philippines in a program called *Transparent Accountable Governance* was highlighted to illustrate the active engagement of one business organization.

TI-Korea made a presentation which highlighted how NGOs can be involved in non-adversarial, cooperative partnerships with governments in anti-corruption initiatives. In addition to their traditional watchdog role, NGOs can also suggest new policy measures, such as those suggested by TI-Korea to the Korean public sector: integrity pacts, the people ombudsperson network, research to monitor the progress of anti-corruption measures, etc. The participation of NGOs is crucial to increase the transparency of local administration. At the same time, the NGOs themselves need to organize suitable participation structures to facilitate public involvement.

During the panel discussion that followed, the observation was made that until now, policy makers have been more focused on *what* to do rather than on *how* to reduce corruption. The panelists proposed that successful anti-corruption efforts need to sequence activities, such as prioritizing among even United Nations' anti-corruption resolutions for implementation. Next, attention was also drawn to the need for NGO independence. If NGOs receive their funds primarily from their governments, their role in Integrity Pacts, in appointing Ombudsmen such as those introduced by the Seoul Metropolitan Government (SMG), etc. may be limited. Another point was made that if corruption is seen as a problem of costs and benefits, it is better to reduce opportunities for corruption rather than detecting or punishing it. For example, the OPEN system has many technical benefits. However, its economic benefits are less clear. An impact study after several years may be highly useful. The success of the OPEN system is due to the highly desirable characteristics of individuals -- the incumbent Mayor and his staff. However, the long-term success of any anti-corruption policy rests not on individuals but also on a good governance system.

Special Session: The Role of Information Technologies in Transparency, Service Delivery and Citizen-Centered Administration in Metropolitan Governments

During this special session, four case studies of incorporating information technologies in public administration were presented. The Swedish Agency for Public Management described the

Kontact-N system, a simplified registration process of business enterprises via the Internet. The City of Vancouver's use of information technologies, ranging from web pages to electronic local maps, was described in the second presentation. The third presentation by the Korean Ministry of Planning and Budget gave an overview of the various information technology initiatives introduced in Korea and the legislative and institutional framework they required. The final presentation also looked at the case of the City of Seoul in using information technology to improve the performance and participation in its administration.

The participants' discussion focused on the latest developments in e-government and citizen-centered administration. The new ICTs are thought to be a powerful tool in bringing administrations and their citizens 'on-line'. Government-citizen relations cover a broad spectrum of interactions at each stage of the policy-making cycle: from policy design, through implementation to evaluation. There are one-way relationships in which the government produces and delivers information for use by citizens. There are two-way relationships in which citizens provide feedback to the government. There are also relationships based on a partnership with the government in which citizens actively engage in the policy-making process.

The main questions discussed were as follows: How can ICTs be applied and utilized in public administration? What role is expected of active citizens participating in e-governance? What are the beneficial or harmful influences of ICTs on governance? All participants recognized the merits of the operation, performance, and effectiveness of the cases presented. But they raised questions such as: How can these systems be easily adopted? How much do they cost and how much time is required in establishing them? And what are the priorities in introducing these systems?

The session concluded that e-governance can utilize active citizen participation and ICTs can be useful for good governance. The concrete requirements identified are strategically establishing a social infrastructure, providing proper legal system for new ICTs environment, simplifying administrative processes and business process re-engineering, strengthening the citizen-government partnership based on active citizen participation, consciousness-raising for citizen and public officials, and enforcing on-line and off-line measures simultaneously.